



# Drama Class

## A Teacher's Handbook

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*This is a sample of the syllabus I handed out to my class. I have added my suggestions on how much time should be spent on each section, feel free to spend more or less time depending on how quickly your kids pick up the goal of each lesson. If you are pressed for time, the "Movement" section can be cut.*

### **1. Basics of theatre**

- Stage Directions. Names of the various places of the stage (upstage, downstage, stage left/right etc). Keeping your face to the audience, levels, blocking.
- Use of body and breathe. Using body, face and breathe to express emotion. Making gestures bigger than usual.
- Diction. Projection and annunciation.

### **2. Pantomime**

- Explain the basics of pantomime. Creating your environment, maintaining your environment, using gestures and facial expressions to create a character and tell a story.
- Group Assignment: "Big Food". Groups of 3 to 5. Create a 5 minute scene pantomime as a group of small people making food for giants. Goals of these lessons: Distinct characters, clear demonstration to the audience of story and food being made.
- Develop a character from someone you know. Observe a friend or family member (NO ONE in this class). Write down a list of habits, quirks, and ticks that person does. Perform a one minute pantomime as that character.
- Group assignment with character
- Solo Pantomime Assignment based on your observed person. Create a 5 minute pantomime as your character. Give me a clear story, environment and character.

### **3. Movement**

- Telling a story to music
- Create a group movement piece
- Solo movement piece

### **4. Improvisation**

- Basics of improv, working in groups, being aware of others in the scene
- Create Characters and dialogue on the spot while retaining all the previous lessons of using gestures, face and body but adding dialogue to scenes.

### **5. Scenes**

- Here we began to work on diction and projection, also go deeper into levels and blocking.
- Create dialog and characters for a short 5 to 7 minute scene in groups.
- Assignment: create a comedic scene.
- Assignment: create a dramatic scene.

## 6. Character Development

- Creating a character from a chosen animal.
- Assignment: choose an animal and write me a one page essay on that animal's characteristics.
- Writing assignment, write a history for your character.
- Assignment: Create a comedic scene in groups with your character.
- Assignment: Create a dramatic scene in groups with your character.
- Assignment: Onstage interview on your character.

## 7. Memorized Scenes

- Monologues
- Memorize and perform 5 to 7 minute scenes

## 8. One Act Plays

- Final performance for an audience, directed by the teacher.

***Note on time spent for each section:*** The time spent on each lesson will largely depend on how often and for how long your class meets. Once you have established when and how often the class meets, sit down with the school schedule and outline how many actual class periods you will have and estimate how much time will be spent on each section. Move on once the kids have achieved the goals of each lesson. The warmups for each class should be as follows:

1. Energy
2. Concentration
3. Warmup related to that days lesson (pantomime, characters, scene development etc...)

*When planning warmups, always bring more than you will need so you don't end up with extra time. Be prepared for some exercises that fall flat, don't be discouraged, it takes some time to find your groove. Feel free to repeat certain warmups, they don't have to be brand new for every class. Also, try to tailor the third warmup to what you will be teaching that day (for example, I saved the Hitch Hiker warmup until the first day we were using the animal characters), it's a perfect setup for that day's lesson. Finally, plan a day or two in the year that is just for fun and silly games, it's a great tension reliever for you and the students.*

## Terms Used in this Manual

**Antagonist:** The character, force, or collection of forces in fiction or drama that opposes the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story; an opponent of the protagonist.

**Blocking:** Refers the movement, gestures and positions of characters within a scene. Boring blocking makes a boring play. See also **Stage Direction**.

**Breaking:** Dropping your character within a scene. This can be done by laughing at the wrong time or turning to the audience and saying "I forgot my line". Breaking interrupts the flow of the scene and damages it.

**Character:** A character is a person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, and characterization is the process by which a writer makes that character seem real to the reader.

**Energy:** The amount of enthusiasm and concentration an actor puts into a scene or character. Energy can be big and exaggerated (as in a comedy or farce) or it can be small and contained (as in a dramatic piece).

**Environment:** The space around a scene created by the actors. This includes placement of time, location and objects, real or pantomimed, placed by the characters.

**Improvisation or Improv:** Improv consists of developing scenes spontaneously. It requires quick thinking and a tremendous amount of teamwork among those performing the scene.

**Levels:** Refers to the blocking in the scene, specifically how the actors are positioned (some sitting, standing, lying). The actors in a scene create an interesting picture and keep the action moving.

**Plot:** An author's selection and arrangement of incidents in a story to shape the action and give the story a particular focus. Discussions of plot include not just what happens, but also how and why things happen the way they do. Stories that are written in a pyramidal pattern divide the plot into three essential parts. The first part is the rising action, in which complication creates some sort of conflict for the protagonist. The second part is the climax, the moment of greatest emotional tension in a narrative, usually marking a turning point in the plot at which the rising action reverses to become the falling action. The third part, the falling action (or resolution) is characterized by diminishing tensions and the resolution of the plot's conflicts and complications.

**Protagonist:** The main character of a narrative; its central character who engages the reader's interest and empathy. See also character.

**Stage directions:** A playwright's written instructions about how the actors are to move and behave in a play. They explain in which direction characters should move, what facial expressions they should assume, and so on.

# Class Rules and Structure

## For the students

1. **Be respectful!** It's scary to get up on stage, take a risk and put yourself out there. No insulting, heckling or belittling anyone else in the class. In order to succeed, there must be an atmosphere of trust and support. Furthermore, correcting someone is for the teacher, not the students!
2. **You will be on time to class, and you will be at every class** (barring illness, family emergency, prearranged absence or alien abduction). There will be important lessons and group assignments, if you decide to just skip class because "I don't feel like it today" you are not only stunting your own learning, you are leaving the people in your group in a lurch. Your classmates will not trust and will not work with you if you have this pattern.
3. **Keep things appropriate!** This is not a place for base or low brow humor, this is not a place to test out all those English swear words you've heard on TV, nor is it a place to say lewd and offensive things to your classmates. Sarah's guideline of appropriateness: Anything you wouldn't say in front of your Mother, your Grandmother or the Director of the school can not be said here.
4. **Be a good audience member!** When someone is performing you will be silent (exceptions of course are laughing at something and coughing or sneezing, those can't be helped). Cell phones will be turned off, and whispering or chatting during a performance is unacceptable. You may want to make the students sit apart from one another.
5. **No stereotypes.** Stereotypes are not characters, they are unimaginative clichés. Tell your students that they are creative and talented and can do better.
6. **No whining!** The rules of the scene are the rules of the scene. "Yeah but, but what if" will get you nowhere fast.

## For the Teacher

1. **Do not judge on talent, grade on effort.** Not everyone has a natural acting ability, but with effort, everyone can shine. Encourage your shier students, tell them that energy and effort make all difference between a good and bad actor.
2. **Give feedback after each scene.** A good rule to follow is say to each student one thing they did well (great character, you stayed very true to the environment etc..) and one thing they need to improve (be sure to face the audience, you need more energy etc...). The students may be defensive at first, explain what constructive criticism is, reassure them that you are not saying that they are bad actors and that everyone could always use improvement. Point out that they can't know they are doing something wrong if no one tells them.
3. **Be consistent and fair.** The rules that apply to one, apply to all. Don't let certain students get away something because "boys will be boys" or "that's just how Susie is". Furthermore, follow your own rules as well and set a good example.
4. **Be supportive and encouraging.** Remember, you will most likely have beginners who have never set foot on a stage. They are very nervous and unsure of themselves. Praise, praise, and praise them, then when you're done, praise them some more.
5. **This is a theatre class, not an English class.** English is not the student's first language and they will make mistakes in their speech. This does not matter! Tell the students that their English will never be corrected by yourself (**or any one else!**) during the scene. Grammar not important, the idea is.

## Samples of warm up Exercises by category

*I will give a few sample exercises for each section and resources for additional exercises on the last page of the manual.*

1. **Introduction** For your first class it is important that the students get to know one another. A could exercise to start with is have the students pair up with someone they do not know, then take 10 to 15 minutes to “interview” the other person. Have them find out name, age, where they are from and an embarrassing moment. Then the class regroups and introduces their partner. I have them include an embarrassing moment to immediately show the students that we all make mistakes and we can all laugh about it. By showing that everyone class is human, the students may be more likely to take risks in front of their class mates.

2. **Trust** In order to have a successful class, there has to be a level of trust. This is not an easy thing for a room full of strangers to accomplish in a short time. These exercises will create a strong atmosphere of trust.

- **Blind Lead**

- How it Works*

- One student is blindfolded, and the room is filled with obstacles (put a couple of chairs everywhere, leave all kinds of junk on the floor). The idea is that the rest of the group will lead the blindfolded student through the room, by talking.

- Goal:** This forces the one who is blindfolded to trust those they are with in order to navigate the room safely. It encourages those shouting directions to feel concern for the well being of the one who is blindfolded.

- What to watch out for:** Make sure people work as a team to shout instructions, if everyone begins shouting at once the person who is blindfolded can not follow directions.

- **Circle Sitting**

- How it Works*

- Have everyone stand in a circle, really close to each other, facing inwards. Then ask everyone to make a quarter turn left. Make everyone stand even closer to each other. When ask the whole group to sit down. If everyone is really close, they will end up sitting on one another's knees, and the whole construction supports itself.

- Goal:** It takes a lot of trust to allow someone into your personal. Close contact like this exercise forces you to get past that feeling of being uncomfortable and trust the people around you.

- What to watch out for:** This exercise could prove difficult for someone who has suffered a past trauma. If anyone appears distressed, do not force them to continue, it will not help with trust. Others may use this as an opportunity to touch the people around them in an inappropriate way. **This can not be allowed.**

- Ever.** This will only create a feeling of fear and distrust and destroy the entire purpose.

- **Fingertips**

*How it Works*

Played in pairs. Students touch all ten fingers, and one student closes her eyes. The other student leads the blind student by his fingertips. Make sure you have some obstacles in the room to navigate around/over/under.

**Goal:** Like **Blind Lead**, This forces the one who is blindfolded to trust the one who is leading them around. It encourages the leader to feel concern for the well being of the one who is blindfolded.

**What to watch out for:** Deliberately leading your partner into an obstacle is not funny in anyway. Causing injury and embarrassment to your partner will destroy any chance at a trusting relationship.

- **Free Falling**

*How it Works*

Nice, but a bit dangerous exercise to build trust. In its simplest (and safest) form all students stand in a circle, one student in the middle. The student in the middle closes her eyes, slowly turns around, and then lets herself fall backwards (or forwards). The other students need to catch her.

**Goal:** The goal is very simply, you have to trust that the others will catch you.

**What to watch out for:** As with other exercises, watch out for people who think causing someone injury is amusing.

- **Solitaire**

*How it Works*

All students but one spread along opposing edges of a wide surface. The student in the middle runs from one end of the space with closed eyes. The others prevent the runner from deviating too much left/right, and catch the runner at the end. This is more difficult than it sounds - it's like after a couple of steps most people start sensing a looming wall in front of them.

**Goal and What to watch out for:** See **Fingertips** and **Blind Lead**.



3. **Energy** Without a good level of energy, it impossible to achieve anything. Therefore it is important to start each class with one or two exercises that will increase everyone's energy.

- **The Scream**

*How it Works*

Everybody in a circle, watch the ground. On your sign, everybody lifts their head and either looks straight, left or right. Whenever 2 people look each other in the eyes, they scream as loud as they can, as if they're startled, and then drop dead.

- **Man Overboard**

*How it Works*

This is a nice elimination warm-up. Everyone spreads out in a staggered line, like in an aerobics class. Then someone calls one of the following:

- 'Land ahoy' - and everyone hops on one foot, doing a salute with one hand
- 'Hit the deck' - all down on the floor in a push-up position
- 'octopus' - make groups of 2, one person on hands and knees and someone else over him or her in the same position
- 'Man overboard' - groups of 2, one bending back and knees and the other on the first's back (piggy-back style)
- 'two three four' - all sit down and start rowing

Whoever is last is out. Repeat till all but one are out.

- **Popcorn**

*How it Works*

Everyone finds themselves a nice spot, and squat down. The teacher now talks the group through this exercise. Everyone is a piece of corn, the floor is a big pan, and we're going to make popcorn. We slowly start heating the pan; as the pan gets hotter, corn starts to 'pop'. A student can 'pop' by jumping up, clapping hands above their head, and saying 'pop'.

Make sure the 'popping' starts gradually, 'popping' is a group thing, and in the end, 'popping' should stop.

**Variations**

Forget to take the pan off the fireplace, and have the popcorn start charring.

- **Alien Tiger Cow**

*How it Works*

Everyone in a circle. There are 3 things a student can be:

- An alien: hold you index fingers up next to your head, as little antenna's and say 'Bleeb bleeb', bending inwards into the circle;
- A cow: bend forward, hold your right hand on your tummy and go 'Mooooo'
- A tiger: push your right hand forward, imitating a claw and roar.

On your sign, every student decides to become one of the three. The idea is for everyone to become the same, which obviously won't be the case, the first time. We re-do this until everyone is in sync. This is a personal favorite of mine and my class.

- **Exaggeration Circle**

*How it Works*

All students in a circle, or a long line. One student starts a little gesture, with or without a little sound.. The next student takes it over and makes it bigger. The last student does the whole thing to the extreme.

**Notes** Make sure the students stick to the original gesture/sound, and don't just do their own thing. We should be able to see the movement grow organically.

- **Whoosh**

*How it Works*

Everybody in a circle. Start with one person, who waves both hands to his/her neighbor, saying 'Whoosh'. The next person passes the Whoosh to his neighbor, and that way the Whoosh is passed around the circle.

There are 4 other sounds/movements that can be made.

'Wow': indicated by saying Wow, and moving both arms down. A Wow changes the direction of the Whoosh

'Zap': instead of passing the Whoosh to your neighbor, it gets zapped to the person you point to. The receiver continues with either a Whoosh to his neighbor, or another Zap to another person. A Wow after a Zap returns to the Zapper.

'Grooooooooooovelicious': for this one the whole group bends down and up again in a kinda groovy way, all saying Grooooooooooovelicious. Afterwards, the person who started the Groovelicious sets the Whoosh in motion again, in any direction.

'Freakout': indicated by waving both hands in the air. Everybody starts screaming and moves to the center of the circle. When everybody's freaked out a new circle is formed, and the starter of the Freakout sets the Whoosh in motion again (or Zaps, or does a Grooooooooooovelicious).

- **Fruit Basket**

*How it Works*

All students but one sitting a circle, one person in the middle. The person in the middle calls out a category or some descriptive that might apply to some or all of the other students. E.g. all women, all blondes. When called, if a student matches the description must leave her chair and find another chair. Person that doesn't find a chair becomes the next in the middle.

When 'Fruitbasket' is called, everyone changes chairs.

**Goal:** Students will develop quick thinking and creativity.

**What to watch out for:** Students have to think of something very quickly, don't let the game stall while someone stands there saying "umm, umm". Also, don't let people say the same thing over and over, everyone has to come up with something original.

**Goal:** The goal of all these exercises are the same, energy.

**What to watch out for:** You may have some whining about how the exercises are "stupid" and people are too embarrassed to do them. Don't let people out of these exercises. To create cohesiveness and trust in the class, everyone needs to make big fools of themselves and laugh about it.

4. **Concentration** Keeping your concentration no matter what is a useful skill in any situation. Not only does good concentration keep you on task it can also keep you safe. A good leader and team member can focus on the task at the hand without allowing themselves to get distracted by everyday details.

- **Break**

*How it works*

Place one student in the center of the circle, tell them to pick a focal point and concentrate. Then the other students are allowed to approach them and try to make them smile or laugh. For the first few rounds, students are not allowed to say anything in order to break their classmate, only gestures and faces. Then allow them to make sounds. Finally, allow them to speak. **Immediately** establish that they **are not allowed to touch the person in any way and must stay at least two feet from the person**. Also, lay down your rule of what is and is not appropriate, and they must speak in English (so you always know what they are saying). I also told my students their will be no removal of clothing, theirs or any one else's.

**Goal:** Keeping your concentration no matter what is going on around you.

Essential for any actor.

**What to watch out for:** Students will say "I can't do it, I can't do it". They can! Tell them to pick a focal point and block out everything else. Ask them if they have ever sat and read or something, or sat watching the TV with chaos going around them. The answer will be yes, tell them it's the same principle. Also, do not let the students get away with rude, insulting or lewd behavior during the exercise.

- **Honey do you love me?**

*How it works*

Line the students facing one another. Going down the line one student says to their partner "Honey do you love me", in the goofiest and silliest way they can think of. Their partner then answers with a straight face "Honey I love you but I just can't smile". Repeat until both sides have said each line.

**Goal:** Like **Break**, keeping your concentration no matter what is going on around you. Essential for any actor.

**What to watch out for:** Again, see **Break**.

- **Mirror**

*How it Works*

Students per 2, facing each other. They can move (arms, legs, eyebrows) slowly, and the other student will mirror them. This is a game of give and take - no-one should be (continuously) leading. Keep movements slow.

**Goal:** Great concentration to mimic the movements of your partner exactly.

**What to watch out for:** Remember this is a mirror, so the two students have to look like a mirror reflection. This is also not a game of "let's trick my partner by moving quickly". All movements must be slow and deliberate so it can copied exactly and at the same time.

- **Clap Snap Stamp**

*How it Works*

All students in pairs, facing each other. We're going to count from one to three, each student one number at a time, and we keep repeating this. So student number one would go one, three, two, one, three, and so on.

Once they get this, we replace the 'one' with a 'snap' (snap your fingers).

Once everyone is into that, we replace the 'two' as well, with a hand-clap.

Finally, we replace the 'three' as well, with a stamp of the right foot. Play at high speed! Variations: Start two gestures at once (snap stomp, snap clap etc) once the circle has gone around a few times.

**Goal:** Keeping concentration on one task while you are surrounded by chaos!

**What to watch out for:** This game is simple and silly, and there is little chance it could get out of hand.

- **Group Freeze**

*How it Works*

Everyone starts milling about the room. Any student may decide to stop walking at any time. As soon as one student stops walking, everyone needs to freeze in position. As soon as everyone is frozen, start walking again.

Obviously, the idea is for the group to freeze as quickly as possible.

Variations

Let all students make noises, hum, whistle etc as they mill about. The noisier, the more challenging the exercise becomes.

**Goal:** Students have to work together as a team and concentrate on those around them.

**What to watch out for:** The same person stopping every time, if only one person leads the freeze everyone will simply watch him or her instead of paying attention to others.

- **SloMo Tag**

*How it Works*

Play tag, but in slow motion. Immensely entertaining if played well; students are not to escape the tagger by making a sudden movement, and the tagger cannot lash out to tag another student. Tell students to breathe, scream and groan in slow motion. \*You may want to have the students exercise walking in slow motion first, to make sure they are aware of how they (naturally) move, and learn how to stick with that in slow motion.

**Goal:** Keeping your movements slow and concise and exercising control over body and mind.

**What to watch out for:** Just as the game warns, students are not allowed any quick movements, it all must be slow in motion at all times.

**5. Creating an environment:** These exercises work best when teaching the section on pantomime. A very basic theatre skill is creating an environment using only your bodies, voices, faces and imagination. It focuses on **levels, environment and characters**.

- **Magical Forest**

*How it Works*

Spread the students out on a stage. Tell them to close their eyes and picture a magical forest. Ask what kinds of things live there. Have them imagine the trees, the plants, and the creatures that inhabit. Ask them what kind of sounds and noises those things would make, tell them nothing is silent in a magical forest. Have become something in the forest, the movement and the sound. Have them create **levels**. Some maybe tall trees, small flowers, medium shrubs, creatures moving about.

**Alternatives:** Create a city with buildings and inhabitants, create a machine, each actor being a different functioning part with a different sound.

**Goal:** The students must first, get over their shyness and become willing to take risks within the class. Two, create an interesting picture and scene.

**What to watch out for:** Students are usually very embarrassed by the idea and feel silly doing it. That's the point! You will have people reluctant to try or giving you a weak attempt. Keep pushing them, keep pointing out that everyone will be part of the scene and there's nothing to be embarrassed about.

- **Object Morphing**

*How it Works*

Good exercise on object work: students in pairs. First student builds an object, as precise and careful as possible, then hands it over to the other. Second student accepts the object, being as truthful to what the first student built as possible. They can not ask "what is it?" they have to pay close attention to the creation and use. After having acknowledged this, student 2 starts morphing the object into something else. This can be done by bending, breaking, twisting, extending, shrinking, you name it. When the new object is complete it gets passed back to student 1, who accepts and then morphs it.

*Variations*

You can do this in a circle, passing and morphing objects around the circle.

**Goal:** Excellent exercises to teach the fundamental rules of pantomime (covered in the pantomime section) and to teach students to stay true to a created object.

**What to watch out for:** Students changing the size and shape of a created object when it's handed to them, they must stay consistent with what their neighbor created. This is covered further in the pantomime section.

- **Group Environment**

*How it Works*

This is a group exercise in building environments. One student starts by entering a 'space' through a 'door', and then leaves that space, through the same or through another door. Any doors placed remain where they are, and the characteristics of the door are not to change.

Then another student enters the same space, and places a mimed object in that space, either by physically placing the object (carrying, wheeling or pushing it

into the space, or by just 'using' it, for example by hanging her coat over a chair. Second students leaves the room, either through one of the established doors, or by placing a new exit.

This continues until every student has done their thing. Each student needs to respect, and perhaps use all objects placed by previous students.

Notes Watch for students Gagging - anyone placing a jukebox in what has clearly been defined as a church is just trying to be funny and screwing up the scene.

**Goal and What to watch out for:** See **Object Morphing**.

- **Family Portraits**

*How it Works*

Fun game to get everyone to work together.

Students are going to 'build' family portraits. Ask for e.g.

- Family of accountants
- Family of circus performers
- Family of Pop Stars
- Family of snakes, rats, cats (alternative, ask them to make the animals rabid)
- Family of garden tools

Tell the students you will want to see who's who in the family. We also want to see who gets along with who, who's the black sheep of the family, and so on. This only works if students watch each other closely.

**Goal:** This is an exercise in teamwork and creativity. The students need to quickly decide who will play what role and how each person will be positioned in the "portrait". If they are unable to work together it will create total chaos and they will not be able to create an interesting picture.

**What to watch out for:** Do not the students all do the same thing in the picture. Encourage them to create levels. You want some standing, some sitting and some lying down. Tell them that professional photographers will position people on different levels, and they need to mimic that type of look. Also, make sure the pictures clearly demonstrates what type of family they are.

- **Slide Show**

*How it Works*

Groups of four, two pairs. Give one pair students a big activity, perhaps a trip through the jungle, or the construction of a home. These students need to present a slide show; the other students will play what's in the slides.

**Goal:** The people describing the pictures must use clear and descriptive words to help the people in the "pictures" create a physical demonstration. Alternately, the people in the pictures must listen carefully to the descriptions to recreate the pictures accurately.

**What to watch out for:** Make sure the pictures clearly demonstrate what is being described. For example if someone "Hear is where I got heat stroke and fainted", if both students in the "picture" faint, that is not an accurate because only one person has fainted. Also, encourage everyone to be creative, they don't always have to a person in the picture, they can be an animal or a house or chair etc... Also, don't let one the people describing the pictures dominate the slideshow. Both people need to talk.

**6. Characters and emotions:** Developing complex and multidimensional characters is important to any talented actor. In order to develop the skills to create characters, you need a base of simple characters and basic emotions. The complexity will come with time. Start your students off with these basic tools.

- **Animalistics**

*How it Works*

Ask the audience for animals. Students play a scene, in which the characters are based on these animals.

Notes Students do not 'become' the animals, they only take over characteristics of the animals. Characteristics may be physical, vocal or status based. For example, 'chicken' might inspire a student to a cowardly character, moving about jerkily.

**Goal:** Creativity and concentration.

**What to watch out for:** The students do not become the actual animal, but rather a person with those animals' characteristics. For example, someone who is a cat may be obsessed with cleanliness, or a snake person may stick out their tongue constantly. Encourage the students to incorporate both physical and emotional characteristics of the animal. This is explored deeper in the character building assignment.

- **Without Words**

*How it Works*

A scene is played, in which the students are not allowed to talk. Sounds, like slamming doors, running water, singing birds, echoing footsteps are allowed.

**Goal:** Nonverbal communication is often more powerful than verbal

Variations: Have students play a scene in which no sound is allowed at all.

This exercise also demonstrates how much can actually be communicated using only our faces and bodies.

**What to watch out for:** Do not the students mouth words to one another, it would defeat the whole goal of nonverbal communication.

- **Evil Twin**

*How it Works*

4 players. 2 will play a scene. The other players are the other's evil twins. At any point, the 'twins' can shout 'freeze' after which they tag out their twin, and continue the scene and do something evil. After that, they move out again, and the original twin brother needs to justify the evil, correct or repair the damage done and continue the scene.

Notes Great setups for this game are things like first dates, or meeting your in-laws for the very first time.

**Goal:** Creating characters opposite of the actors before you while staying true to the scene.

**What to watch out for:** Make sure the students don't deviate from the original story.

- **Emotion Characters**

*How it works*

Break students into groups of 3 to 4. Then give them a place and an emotion. They must keep this one emotion for the entire scene. This is not as easy as it sounds! They must carry on with scene as normal except for the fact their emotional state doesn't change. Try to come up with conflicting locations and emotions.

Examples: Location: Family Dinner      Emotion: Fear  
                  Location: Disney World      Emotion: Sadness  
                  Location: A court of law      Emotion: Joy  
                  Location: Tropical vacation      Emotion: Anger  
                  Etc...

**Goal:** Keeping one emotion for the whole scene helps with concentration and exaggeration.

**What to watch out for:** Students may say only lines that reflect their emotion, this is not the point! Stress that their words need to be normal (for example, at the family dinner table you'll say "please pass the salt" and the response will be "hear you are", this should be said with fear without saying "I'm afraid of salt").

- **Your Fired**

*How it works*

This is a scene with 2 students, in which the lines are scripted. Here's the script:

(1) *{Knocks on a door}*  
 (2) *Come in. You know why I called you?*  
 (1) *{Indicates she does not know why}*  
 (2) *{Hands 1 a (mimed) piece of paper}*  
 (1) *I thought you wouldn't take that into account?*  
 (2) *You're fired.*  
 (1) *Fine. I hated that stupid job anyway.*

Have the students play that scene. They need to stick to the script, but can really do anything as long as they don't add any lines. It probably won't be all that interesting.

Then make them replay the scene, but give them a side coaching (which the other student and the audience or the rest of the group don't hear). See if the scenes become any more interesting. Things you might give a student could be

- You're nervous, happy, sad, afraid of the other
- The other smells nice/stinks
- You turn into a crow/monkey/cow
- You are in a wheelchair
- Your underwear doesn't quite fit (too small)
- You are a kleptomaniac

Give each student in the scene a different instruction and they have to play off each other.

**Goal:** Good exercise in developing characters and keeping your concentration in a scene.

**What to watch out for:** Don't let the students deviate from the script. They must stay true to the lines while staying in their character.



## Pantomime, the foundation

When most people hear the word pantomime, they think of “trapped in a box” or “walking against the wind”. But pantomime is much more than that. It is the building blocks to any successful actor. It teaches creativity, character development, blocking, and staying true to the environment of a scene. Start by asking the students how they would pantomime a phone. Most people will use their index finger and thumb to create a phone. Ask them “is that how you hold your phone?” No, it’s not. Pantomime is about implying an object’s existence using your face and body and staying true to its creation. For example, if someone pantomimes a glass and hands it to another person, they need to be aware of the size of the glass, it does not shrink or grow magically, it stays the same. Be aware of object placement, we’ll stay with the glass, if you are drinking from it, you must remember to put it down when you are finished. Objects do not magically float up into space so you can not simply “let go” of created object. Use the **Environment** exercises to reinforce these lessons. Stop the students if size or shape of something is changed and be sure they are aware.

### Assignments for Pantomime section

#### 1. Big Food, group assignment

This is the first pantomime assignment. Break the class into groups of 4 to 5 people. They must create a scene in which they are making food for giant people. The scenes should be 3 to 5 minutes in length, **don’t let them cheat and create a short scene**. The scene must be pure pantomime, no real objects are to be used. The answer to the question they will ask, is **No**, they can not desks, tables or chairs. No, nu, nem, nine and nyet.

In this assignment they must:

- A. Demonstrate clearly what they are creating
- B. Have distinct characters. This early in the class, two dimensional characters are acceptable. Who is the lazy one? The bossy one? The flirty one? Etc...
- C. Follow the rules of a plot. They must have a protagonist and antagonist (in this case they are the protagonists and the giant people are the antagonists) and have a clear story with a conflict and resolution.
- D. Stay true to the environment they are creating.

Another lesson to keep in mind when teaching this section is the one of the biggest mistakes beginning actors make, **turning their back to the audience**. Watching the back side of a bunch of actors is *boring*! They must face the audience. All good stage actors do something that is known as “**cheating out**”. For example, in real life when you speak to someone you face them, well, on stage this doesn’t work because it blocks half of your face. During a conversation on stage you either face the audience and talk to one another sideways, or you angle your body out so that your face is clearly seen. Yes, this feels unnatural at first, and it will take many repetitions until it comes naturally, but it is essential.

2. **Mimicry and character development.**

After the big food scene and before the class meets again, send the students home with this assignment: Observe a friend, family member or stranger (do not allow people to observe other class mates). Note how the person stands, walks, sits etc... Does this person have any “tics” or “habits”? Do they constantly tug at their hair, jingle their keys, scratch their face, whatever. Have them write it down, 5 or more short observations. When they return to class with the observations, have the students mimic the character in a big and exaggerated way. Have them demonstrate these exaggerations to one another. Question the students, how does your person walk? Show me a weird habit. Then tell them to exaggerate that to the point of farce.

3. **Group assignment with mimicry**

Break the class into groups of 3 to 5 students and create a pantomime with these characters. There will come a time when you can say to your students “Give me a scene” and they will be able to create one using only their very vivid imaginations, however, this early in the class they will still be unsure of their talent and you may need to give them more structure. Assign a place where the scene takes place to each group, the post office, a restaurant, the school, the mayor’s office etc. Like the previous assignment the following rules must be followed:

- A. Demonstrate clearly what they are creating
- B. Have distinct characters. This early in the class, two dimensional characters are acceptable.
- C. Follow the rules of a plot. The must have a protagonist and antagonist (in this case they are the protagonists and the giant people are the antagonists) and have a clear story with a conflict and resolution.
- D. Stay true to the environment they are creating.

Again, no chairs, tables, desks or props of any kind. State this clearly before the assignment. Be prepared for whining and pleading. Also mention that conflicts do not have to be complicated and huge, it can be as simple as trying to mail a letter and the line is too long.

4. **Solo Pantomime with character** Using their mimicry character, they must create a solo pantomime with their character, their big exaggerated character. The scene should follow all the previous rules, and be to 3 to 5 minutes long. Some students tried to get away with 60 second scenes. I made them do it over. This is the final assignment in this section. I told my students we will only move on when I saw that everyone, **everyone**, in the class had clearly shown me they had learned the rules of pantomime.

\*Notes on rehearsal time: In an ideal world, the class would meet for an hour everyday with 20 minutes of warmups and assignments stretched over a two to three days, but we don’t live in an ideal world. My class met once a week for two hours. I would spend 30 to 40 minutes on warmups, 10 to 15 minutes talking about the goal of that day’s lesson, 20 to 25 minutes on rehearsal and the rest of the class for performance and feedback. Feel free to walk around during their rehearsal time to give them advice on characters and blocking.

# Improvisation

Improv! Creating a spontaneous scene out of nothing requires creativity, team work, wit, spontaneity and how to think quickly on your feet. Tell your kids that even if they've rehearsed something a hundred times, mistakes will be made in live theatre. The trick is to 1) make a mistake with confidence and 2) improv through the mistake, then the audience will **never** know. In order for an Improv to be a success some simple rules must be followed at all times:

1. Listening (yes...): agreement, acceptance, no saying no! **This is the number one, hard and fast rule of any successful Improv.** Whatever someone else suggests, you agree!
2. Heightening (...and!): How to agree as improvisers while having a conflict in the scene. You can still create a conflict in the scene by agreeing. This is commonly known as "yes, and..." or "yes, but..."
3. Commitment: Grab a position and hold on tight. Stay true to the reality of the scene. Come out with something and keep playing it. Do not change your character in the middle of a scene, that will only create confusion for the other students and make the improv a failure.
4. Environment: Every scene happens somewhere (a kitchen), and something should be happening in that space (using a blender, perhaps).
5. Action: Reaching out for something... the things you find physically will inform your scene more than anything else... and it's not what you do with the blender, it's HOW. Be creative in your scene, challenge yourself and the other students.
6. Character: You have a character. With a voice. And a physical being. Try to be someone new in an improv, create a definable and original character.
7. Relationship: More importantly, your character has a relationship with another character.
8. **This is an improv, not a monologue.** The goal of an improv is to work with the people in your scene, not steal the scene for yourself. This is not a contest to see who can be the funniest or most witty, this is a group effort.

**Exercises for Improv.** Start with very simple and basic exercises to get them used to it. In the beginning, feel free to stop the scene by yelling "Freeze!" and correcting them. Tell them if they need to face the audience, or speak up. Encourage the timid ones to join the scene and alternately tell the students who try to turn into a monologue (there's always a few, and your dear author was very guilty of it during her drama class days) that they need to be aware of the others and work with them. Then have them restart precisely where they left off. You also may need to call the scene to an end as if it drags on with no real purpose or goal. As the students get better, have them start and clearly end their scenes on their own. Have pre-established hand signals for "Keep it going" and "Wrap it up". For improv, they can now use tables, chairs and desks, but all props must be pantomimed.

**Exercises:** I have included many exercises for this section because you will have to spend several class periods on improv. Once students learn the basics of projection, pronunciation and creating a scene, they will be able to move into rehearsed scenes. Before you start this, teach your students projection and diaphragm breathing. Also talk about pronunciation and to avoid mumbling on stage. Stress that they need to remember the pantomime lessons about facing out, blocking and creating an interesting scene. They simply can not stand in one spot and recite lines, *yawn*. Threaten to go back to pantomime if these rules are not followed, believe me, it works.

- **Yes Lets**

*How it Works*

Pick a group activity, like throwing a party or organizing a picnic. One student starts, saying "Let's ..." filling in what she wants to do. Then she starts actually doing what she said she wanted to do. A second student jumps in, saying "Let's ..." do something else, to advance the group activity. Both students say "Yes, let's do that" and start doing whatever suggested. Third student jumps in, suggests what to do, and again all students loudly agree to do it, and actually do it. Continue till everyone has suggested something.

**Goal:** This is the best way to teach the first and most important rule of improv! It also forces the students to listen to one another and work together.

**What to watch out for:** Since is normally the first introduction to improv, students may be reluctant and nervous. Encourage them that no idea is wrong and that they can be creative if they just put their minds to it.

- **Artist Model Clay**

*How it Works*

3 students. One is a lump of clay - behind her is a second student who is a model. Model takes a pose, which the 'clay' is not supposed to see. The third student becomes the artist, who will model the clay after the model. The artist is not supposed to touch the clay, can't speak and it not allowed to show the clay what to do or to become. When done, let the model inspect the artwork and see if details fit. Have everyone switch out until they have played every role.

**Goal:** Students must use good listening and descriptive skills to do this exercise properly. Since no touching or demonstrating is allowed, the artist must be very precise in his wording.

**What to watch out for:** Do not let the artist physically demonstrate anything to the model. This is a strictly verbal exercise.

- **Improv Story**

*How it Works*

Students form a line on the stage. A title for a story, and a story genre is given by you. Point to a student and they start telling the story. At any point in time you can switch to another student, who needs to continue the story flawlessly, even if the switch happened in the middle of a sentence or even in the middle of a word.

**Goal:** Teaches the students that they can create a story or plot on their own or as a group.

**What to watch out for:** Make sure they stick to the title and genre! Also, don't let them ramble incoherently.

- **Just Gibberish**

*How it Works*

Play a scene, completely in gibberish, no translations provided. The scene should be perfectly clear to the audience - we should be perfectly able to translate every gibberish sentence, and the story should make sense.

Notes: This will only work if the stories are extremely simple, and if the Platform is made clear right from the start. Some students tend to do this as a scene without words, but that is not the idea of the exercise.

**Goal:** Focuses on character and using your face, voice and body to tell a story. Acting isn't just words, it's how you say them.

**What to watch out for:** The emotions and intent behind the words should be clear, don't let students use charades to convey what they mean.

- **Translate Gibberish**

*How it Works*

This is best played with an odd number of students. Everyone in a circle. The first student gives a gibberish word to her right neighbor, who translates the word. The next student provides the next gibberish word, and so on.

**Variations:**

The receiver can provide both the translation, and a new gibberish word.

You may want to add the origin of the language along with the translation.

**Notes**

Any gibberish word might be translated as 'banana' of course, but that is not the idea of the exercise. For your translation, use the first thing that comes to mind.

You may be inspired by the whole sound of the word (it might sound like something 'known'), or parts of the word (only the vowels, or only the consonants), or by the intonation of the 'giver', or even by her expression or body language.

**Goal:** Creativity and spontaneity, creating a story behind a word.

**What to watch out for:** The definition should sound like the word, that way students can't make up their definition beforehand.

- **Props**

*How it Works*

In this game the students need to come up with an original/funny use of a prop. They cannot use the prop the way it is supposed to be used for, obviously.

**Notes**

You could really use any object as if it were a cell phone, but that is not the idea of the exercise. Look at the object (or it's parts) and see what inspires you. We once saw a student, given a chair, who turned into a prisoner. The back of the chair became the bars of this cell.

**Goal:** The teams need to work together and play off each other. You may see someone naturally take the lead in this game and come up with the ideas, this is okay as long as the other person participates as well.

**What to watch out for:** Don't let people use props in an "obvious" way. Make them come up strange and unique ways to use what they are holding.

- **Object Narrative**

*How it Works*

Place one chair on stage. The group sits or stands to the sides so they can see what is going on. Someone chooses an object from the room and places it on the chair. (Or get an object from the audience in a show) That object is your suggestion.

One at a time, three members (or how ever many you decide) do a short monologue off that object. One person starts and when they are done, they leave the object on the chair for the next person. Whoever is inspired jumps up next adding their part of the story/situation from another character's point of view. and the third person completes the cycle.

This exercise is extremely character based. The first character sets the story in motion and then the other two people find a way to be another interesting character that will accept and heighten the first initiation. The challenge is to not be totally predictable with the follow up character choices (avoid immediately choosing to be the spouse when you could be that person's mailman...or manicurist instead). At the same time you still want to support the story line and justify what the previous characters have already established. The characters don't have to know each other, but they must have connections (if only through the object).

**Goal:** listening (you must listen to the characters before you to know how you can fit into the story/situation and justify it.) and character work. Also, truthfulness (try not to focus 'just' on the object. It's about the relationships and connections between the 3 different characters.)

**What to watch out for:** Students deviating from the other stories, they must tie their monologue in to the others.

- **Crisis Situation**

*How it Works*

Great exercise for spontaneity. 2 students on stage approach each other with a crisis, and an object unrelated to the crisis. After each has presented his or hers, each solves the other's crisis with their own object. Replies must be instantaneous and may be ridiculous.

Example:

Student A: My wife left me and I'm stuck here with this t-shirt

Student B: I got robbed and all I have left is my good looks.

Student A: Here's my t-shirt; you can sell it and make some money.

Student B: Erm... Marry me.

**Goal:** Like many others, creativity, creating a story and working together in a scene.

**What to watch out for:** The resolutions must fit the crisis. For example a student can't say "I lost my car" and have the response from the other student be "Here's a pen" or something equally unrelated.

- **Master Servant Disaster**

*How it Works*

2 students, one is the master, the other is the servant. The master will ask the servant for something simple. The servant always blocks the question, and explains why this should not be possible. The master always accepts this, and asks for something else (which turns out to be impossible as well). Every time the servant has to explain why this should not be possible, the situation gets worse, until the whole thing turns out to be a disaster.

An example:

*Perkins, get me a glass of brandy.*

*Yes sir. Oh, sir, that won't be possible sir, we're out of brandy.*

*Well, get me a glass of whisky, then.*

*Yes sir. Ah, sir, um, we're out of whisky too, sir.*

*Oh? Well get my any kind of alcohol, then.*

*Ah sir, we're out of alcohol sir.*

*Perkins, have you been drinking again?*

*Well, the staff had a little party last night, sir.*

*I see. Well get me a glass of water from the kitchen then.*

*Yes sir. Ah, sir, the water pipes are bust sir, sorry.*

*Well, get me some water from the pond then.*

*Ah, yes, sir, uh, sorry sir, the pond is dry, sir.*

And so on, until it turns out that the staff had a little party, accidentally set the kitchen on fire, used the water from the pond to fight the fire, and so on.

Eventually, the only room still standing is the master's study, the rest of the castle has burnt down and all staff are dead. And all this for a perfectly logical explanation.

The idea is for the servant to connect all elements the master brings up, into one and the same disaster.

**Goal:** Even though this violates the first rule of improv (agreeing) it's still a good exercise in teaching listening and working together.

**What to watch out for:** Students may try to cut the scene short by leaping to the conclusion too soon! They must take small steps towards the final realization (the house has burned down or the world has blown up).

- **Death in a Minute**

*How it Works*

2 or 3 students play a 1 minute scene, in which one student must die.

Notes

Tell students to take risks. Why not just drop dead after 5 seconds and leave it up to the other student to justify the death.

**Goal:** Paying attention to the other actors in your scene to create a story while staying true to the rules. They need to pay attention to one another to know which one will die.

**What to watch out for:** Only one actor must die! They can not discuss before hand or break character to establish which one it will be, they have to stay focused on the scene.

- **Sitting Standing Lying**

*How it Works*

Silly game to teach fast acting.

3 students play a scene. At any point in time, there should always be one student standing, one student sitting and one student lying down. As soon as a sitter stands up, the stander needs to sit down.

Try to justify the moves !

Notes: When I first did this assignment I had my students improv a scene. Then when all the groups I went back to the first group and told them to do the scene again, only this time I added the sitting, lying and standing rule.

**Goal:** Student must work together as a team and pay attention to one another in order for this to be a success. It also forces the “levels” I discussed earlier in Family Portraits and does not allow the students to simply stand still for the entire scene.

**What to watch out for:** Don’t allow the students to stay in the same position for the whole scene, they must get up and move around.

- **Hitch Hiker**

*How it Works*

Use 4 chairs to build the interior of a car. One student starts driving the car, and another student becomes a hitch hiker, hiking a ride. The hitch hiker character has a particular character tick or particular emotion, which the driver takes over.

Other hitch hikers join in, each with their own characteristics or emotions, taken over by the driver and the passengers in the car as the hiker joins. When the car is full, one of the students leaves the car to make room for the new guest.

**Goal:** Like most exercises, this is about concentration and creativity. It also a fun game to get the energy of both the students and the audience up.

**What to watch out for:** Make sure any given “tick” or “characteristic” leaves with the student. Make sure the students justify leaving the car, and don’t just get up and leave.

- **Translation for the Deaf**

*How it Works*

We need 3 students for this game. One will be an expert on a topic provided by the audience; another will be the interviewer. The third will provide simultaneous translation for the hearing impaired, using 'sign language'. This can also work with a group of 4, simply have 2 experts.

Notes: This works best if the interview itself does not go too fast, so the translator has plenty of time to translate. Also helpful are returning keywords that the translator can always translate the same way.

A gimmick is to translate everything literally, even 'dummy' words, like 'oh', 'great', 'hm hm'.

**Goal:** Like many this is an exercise in creativity and concentrating. The translator has to be close attention to pay attention to the “expert” in order to translate what is being said.

**What to watch out for:** Make sure all the students work together and pay close attention to one another. Encourage the person translating to be creative, don’t just make random gestures, try to use the arms, face and body to portray the meaning.



- **Alphabet Game**

*How it Works*

This is a scene consisting of 26 lines of dialog. The first line starts with a given letter (say 'R'). The reply to that line must start with a 'S', and so on, until the whole alphabet has been covered. After 'Z' comes 'A'.

Students that hesitate, or use the wrong letter 'Die', and are replaced by another student. The replacement needs to take over the character of the student she replaces.

**Goal:** This not only incorporates memory and concentration but also forces students to work together and pay close attention to the scene in order to get through the alphabet in the right order.

**What to watch out for:** This is a very difficult and challenging exercise so it should be an exercise used later in the training after the students have had a chance at easier improv games.

- **Only Questions**

*How it Works*

A scene is played, in which any sentence used by the students must be a question. Students that use statements instead of questions are boo-ed out by the audience (audience yells 'Die') and are replaced by other students. New students need to take over the character of the students they replace.

*Notes*

Although questions are quite often frowned upon in improv, in this game the idea is to build a story. That implies that any question should be giving information, and should be (implicitly) advancing on the information already available.

Evidently, the next student should implicitly accept any information that was given in the previous question(s).

**Goal:** See the alphabet game.

**What to watch out for:** Again, same level of difficulty as the alphabet game.

Also, make sure students use questions to advance the story and do not fall into the trap of asking the same thing over and over or simply resorting to asking "What? Who? Where?" etc...

## Scenes

After several class periods spent on Improv, you have by now proved to your students that they are creative and talented enough to come up with their own plots and characters. Now, they get to rehearse beforehand! Since it is easier to do comedy, than drama, start your students on creating comedic scenes. I still do not recommend allowing props, only furniture. This keeps the students revisiting the pantomime lessons. Also you will need to make sure that they practice blocking as well as dialogue. Even the best dialogue falls flat if the blocking is boring.

### 1. **Picture Scene**

This is where those endless Newsweeks you have been getting from the Peace Corps office come in handy. Cut out pictures with two people in them (try to avoid celebrities or any famous figures, you want the students to create a whole new character, not mimic someone famous) and pass them out to pairs of your students (have at least one or two pictures with three people in case you have an odd number). Tell them to create a scene around that picture. It could be at any point during the day the picture was taken, before, during, or after. Stress characters, plot (a beginning, a conflict, a resolution, a clear end) and blocking. This is the perfect first step to writing, blocking and performing scenes from scratch. 5 to 7 minute scene.

### 2. **Comedic Scene**

Groups of 3 to 4, 5 to 7 minute scene. Create a comedic scene from scratch. Do this assignment two to three times rotating the groups (it's best to assign groups or have them count off). It important to repeat this assignment over a few class periods in order to give feedback so the students can improve. Move on when you feel the class is ready. Allow 35 to 40 minutes of rehearsal and have them give the scenes immediately.

### 3. **Dramatic Scene**

Groups of 3 to 4, 5 to 7 minute scene. Create a dramatic scene from scratch. Like the comedic, same rules of past lessons apply and repeat this assignment until the students have learned. Be aware that the first dramatic scene they do may not drama but melodrama. With big plots and exaggerated characters. This is not the goal of dramatic scenes. Talk to them about maintaining energy in a scene while controlling at the same time. Also say that dramatic plots are not all fires, floods, deaths and natural disasters. They can be simple and downplayed. Same amount of rehearsal time.

Notes on this section: Depending on how often and for how long your class meets depends on how much time is spent on each lesson. It is very important to do the scenes (comedic and dramatic, not the picture) a few times to make sure the lessons hit home. When you move on to the next lesson is a judgment call.

# Character Development

In this lesson, the students create an entire, fully developed character from an animal. This is a fun and challenging exercise and the results can be very rewarding, and humorous. The following lessons will outline step by step how to accomplish this.

1. Choose an animal and write a short paper on it.  
This is just as it's written. Give the students the assignment to choose an animal and write about it. Tell them you want to know how it lives, what it's mating habits are, what it eats, how it hunts and where it lives. When they bring it into class have them each name the animal and give a few interesting facts about it. Then have them mill around the class as that exact animal. Verbally guide them through some disaster (bomb, aliens, rapid evolution whatever) where suddenly they find themselves changing into a human being, but they still retain the characteristics of that animal. Tell them to "evolve" into a human version of their animal. Ask them, how would this animal walk if it were human? How would it sound? What weird "tics" or "habits" might it have (example, a dog human may be constantly scratching himself, a cat human obsessed with being clean, a rabbit human may have a twitchy nose, a monkey human may pick things other characters). Then have them walk around and interact with each other as these characters. After a few minutes, stop the class and then proceed to pick out individuals. Ask them to demonstrate their character's walk, or ask if they have any wired habits. Ask what type of job they might have, are they married, etc... Tell them to think about these things and tell them that their animal should still be clear in their human.
2. Assignment: Create a comedic scene in groups with your character.  
Same rules of the comedic scene apply. Groups of 3 to 4, 5 to 7 minute scene. In theory, this should be done only once but, feel free to repeat this assignment if you don't clearly see their characters. Their characters should be fun and exaggerated.
3. Assignment: Create a dramatic scene in groups with your character. Groups of 3 to 4, 5 to 7 minute scene. This is a very challenging exercise in the fact that it's difficult to scale down your character for a dramatic piece while still maintaining its essence. Again, one time, but may need to be repeated after feedback is given.

4. Write your characters history. This needs to be handed out at least a week before the 5<sup>th</sup> and final assignment of this section. I gave my students eight specific questions to answer as their character:
  1. What is your name?
  2. Where are you from?
  3. What is your job?
  4. Are you married? Divorced? Widowed? Single?
  5. Do you have kids? If yes, how many?
  6. Tell me about childhood and family.
  7. Describe your best and worst moment.
  8. Describe your typical day.

Read these histories carefully and take notes on a few specifics for the interview.

5. Assignment: Onstage interview on your character. One by one the students stand up on stage and are interviewed by you, the teacher (you will stay in the audience during the interview and the student stands on stage alone), as their character. The interview should last 7 to 10 minutes. Start with the same generic questions for everyone (Name, job, place of birth blah blah blah) but have notes ready to ask character specific questions. Also, encourage the students to tangent off and tell stories after each question, and in return, play off what they say. Open the floor to questions from their classmates.

## Monologues and Memorized Scenes

This is the final for the year. I suggest starting with monologues first then assigning memorized scenes in groups of two or three. The point of these exercises is to combine everything they have learned so far about stage presence, concentration, characterization and blocking while developing the skill of memorization. At this point they need to keep in mind all the past instructions while self directing as well. This is the point where you will introduce diction and pronunciation exercises and also work on projection.

Tips for memorization:

- 1) Write out your lines on cue cards. One side has the two to three words spoken before your line, the other side has your full line. (For monologues this still works, just break it down).
- 2) Don't try to memorize everything at once. Break it down it down to a paragraph at a time and go over and over it until you it's instinct.
- 3) Write it out. Writing helps with memory.

Website for diction exercises:

<http://www.write-out-loud.com/dictionexercises.html>

## Resources for Warmups

- 1) This is the best site I have found for warmup exercises and improv exercises, it sorts the games by category and by name and has several to choose from.  
[http://www.humanpingpongball.com/game\\_categories.html](http://www.humanpingpongball.com/game_categories.html)
- 2) This site has a few games and some excellent improv guidelines.  
<http://www.chicagoimprov.org/wiki/index.php?title=Exercises>
- 3) This site has a few games and drama techniques:  
<http://www.dramaresource.com/dramagames/index.htm>
- 4) An extensive resource page: <http://webtech.kennesaw.edu/jcheek4/drama.htm>
- 5) Lesson plan idea and warmup exercises. It is a K-12 site, so some of the exercises may be too young for high school students:  
<http://www.childdrama.com/lessons.html>

## Resources for Monologues and Scenes

- 1) <http://www.geocities.com/pocolocoplayers/free.html>
- 2) <http://drama.eserver.org/plays/>
- 3) <http://www.theatrehistory.com/plays/>
- 4) <http://www.stagepage.info/index.html>
- 5) <http://www.singlelane.com/proplay/>
- 6) <http://www.caryn.com/acting/monologues.html>